

# From lawyer to divorce coach

**Emma Heptonstall, 45, left her legal career after inspiration in a café**

I had worked in the courts since qualifying in 1999, and had reached the stage of my career when I would have to go into a management or a judicial role if I wanted to progress. Neither felt right for me because I really liked working with people.

I've always been someone who has loved learning, and in 2009 I'd trained as a master NLP [neuro-linguistic programming] practitioner. The skills I learned helped me as a lawyer and I found I was sometimes able to help couples come to agreement when they struggled.

However, as my role within the court service had to remain independent and neutral, there was a limit to how much I could really help couples. So in 2011, I took redundancy and retrained to be a mediator. But while I enjoyed my mediation work and still carry out some today, I still felt I wanted more freedom to work on a personal level with clients.

The idea of becoming a divorce coach came to me when I was sitting in a café in August 2014. At the time, I didn't even know whether it was a viable career, but after researching online I found one other person who was practising in the UK.

I set up a website in January 2015 to market my services, focusing on primarily helping women who were going through a divorce. For the first six to eight months the site wasn't getting any traction and it was really hard work. But I gave it some thought and I realised that the mindsets of women going through divorce aren't necessarily the same.

Marketing advice always centres around finding that one, perfect client and trying to appeal to them. I consider myself more a coach than a therapist, so for me targeting women who had instigated divorce rather than those who'd been

left seemed the right way to go. I took up the strapline "Ladies Who Leave" and things just flew. Of course, I happily coach women who have been left, and I'm also more than willing to work with men, I just don't market specifically to them.

In 2017, I released a book called *How to be a Lady who Leaves* and I'm currently working on another proposal, this time on high-conflict divorce, dealing with difficult issues such as coercive or financial control.

The only drawback in my new career is that I find I sometimes miss people – the majority of my book was written in coffee shops because I love having life around

me. Plus, like any self-employed person, I know that nothing's guaranteed – if I work I get paid, but if I don't I don't!

The way my service works means I'm available to clients seven days a week via phone and text. That can mean I find myself working long days on Sundays. But I don't believe in giving clients a weekly slot, as things evolve all the time and clients need regular contact. That said, I have control of my own time and as long as I have the internet, can work from anywhere.

Visit [howtobealadywholeaves.co.uk](http://howtobealadywholeaves.co.uk) for more information

**"When I first had the idea I didn't even know if it was a viable career!"**

## How to become a divorce coach

**We asked Emma for her top tips**

- Take professional coaching qualifications
- Legal training is a plus – although not essential
- Make sure you are empathetic and compassionate
- Consider your ideal customer when marketing.
- Self-motivation is key, as divorce coaching is still a relatively new area